

# ST. GILES' PRAYER WEEK – JANUARY 2019

## PRAYING BOLDLY – FREQUENTLY – EXPECTANTLY

### United In Prayer

Welcome to the first St. Giles' Prayer Week notes of 2019: Happy New – and prayerful - Year!

Hopefully, by now you'll be familiar with our monthly St. Giles' Prayer Week notes to help your prayer life but, if you're not, it's great that you've picked up these notes for January 2019. Their purpose is to encourage you to spend more regular time with God, whether that's in a Prayer Triplet; in a Home Group meeting with a particular prayer focus during this 'Prayer Week' first week of the month; or individually. Do use them to help you wait on Him; listen to Him; and talk with Him – all of which are crucial to having a healthy prayer life.

When we seek - as a whole church - to go deeper together with Jesus Christ, prayer is at the heart of our discipleship journey. There's real spiritual power when we pray together in unity and agreement; these notes aim to help you to structure your prayer time well, with different themes & emphases each month, about which all of St. Giles' is praying together over the same time period.



Prayer Week starts each month with First Priority Prayer on the first Sunday evening – and on January 6<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate Epiphany: the coming of the magi - “wise men from the east”, as Matthew tells us - to worship the infant Jesus and to bring him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The image above is of a tiny painting of the Coming of the Magi by the fifteenth-century Florentine artist, Paolo Uccello – admittedly re-imagined in rather fine Italian costumes! In it, the painter reminds us in a very clever visual way that, even at his birth, Jesus's ultimate destiny to die on the cross for our sins was already there – notice that the shape of the beams of the stable, just in front of the ox and the ass, are in the form of a cross. Even at Christmas, Easter is already present.

The magi's presence in the stable at Epiphany is also seen in Christian tradition as the first sign that Jesus came not only as the Messiah of the Jewish people, but also for all Gentiles – and so to be the Saviour of all the peoples of the world.

Our Prayer Week notes this month therefore reflect a particular emphasis on themes of this Epiphany season, including praying for the worldwide mission of the Church – that the coming and message of Jesus Christ, as it was on that first Epiphany, is for all peoples.

## **Prayer Time Practicalities**

Remember to “Pray as you can; not as you can’t!” (Father Luigi Gioia) Make it as easy as possible, whether as a group or as an individual, to pray. Choose a time and place that works well for you, and remember that it doesn’t have to be perfect.

## **Structuring Your Prayer Time**

Try your best to pray for an hour, and start with the same 3 areas of prayer in the first 15 minutes:

**PRAISE** - Praise God for who He is, and so bring His presence into your praying (Psalm 63:3)

**WAITING** - Bring God’s peace into our prayer time, and focus ourselves on Him (Psalm 46:10)

**CONFESSION** - Before we raise our prayers, we need to be right with God. (Psalm 139:23)

This Epiphany Prayer Week, spend each of the remaining 3 quarter-hours praying about these areas:

### **First Quarter-Hour: THANKSGIVING FOR WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU**

Thank God for all that He has given you – your faith; your church family; your own family; your friends; the things in life with which you’ve been blessed; the glories of creation. Thank God above all for the gift of Jesus Christ, & for the gift of the Holy Spirit, through whom He’s at work in the world today. Thank God for the gifts with which He’s made you, & pray that He’ll continue to grow them in you. Ask him to help you discern how best to use them in His service; what gifts *you* can bring to *Him*. “I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.” (Psalm 9:1)

### **Second Quarter-Hour: PRAYING FOR OTHERS IN NEED**

Pray for those in our country and throughout the world who do not enjoy the necessities of life that we take for granted, let alone the comforts that we enjoy. Pray that they will receive food & water; personal security; shelter; healthcare & education. Pray especially for refugees, who - like the Holy Family, forced to flee to Egypt soon after the Nativity – have had to leave their homes & communities. “Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:31)

### **Third Quarter-Hour: PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH & WORLD**

Pray for our Christian brothers & sisters around the world, especially in the Middle East - lands from which the Magi came, & where being a follower of Jesus is increasingly to place your life in danger. Pray that they will all be encouraged in their faith & hope; & that their courageous & loving witness will see many men, women & children come to Christ. Pray that the authorities will protect them & their freedom to worship. “Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” (Hebrews 13:3)

### **A Final Suggestion to start the New Year well!**

Many of you will already follow a daily devotional, giving you a Bible reading or readings for the day; some reflection on those; & some prayer pointers. If you don’t already do this, I really recommend that you start this spiritual practice – *the way* in which we get to know & understand who God is & how God acts, is through Scripture’s witness, especially in the life of Jesus in the Gospels. You may like to find your own devotional, but we suggest Bible in One Year (<https://www.bibleinoneyear.org> and in an excellent Apple or Android app, also in audio form) is a great place to start.

And if you receive responses from God in answer to your prayers, please do let Tim or Lee know - we’d love to share testimonies with all of St. Giles’, about what God’s doing in our lives. Pray well!